

NSC BRIEFING

10 September 1957

SYRIA

- I. The Intelligence Community has reached a series of agreed conclusions about the situation in Syria. These were approved in an SNIE on 3 September. The most important conclusions are:
- II. In absence forceful intervention from outside, the Syrian ruling group, or some variant thereof, will probably be able to stay in power for some time:
 - A. opposition is weak, disorganized
 - B. ruling group commands:
 1. street mobs,
 2. army,
 3. Barraj's intelligence organization,
 4. best organized political parties (Arab Socialist Resurrection Party ^(Baath) and Communist Party)
- III. Some internal opposition groups may hope for intervention:
 - A. These might favor action by Arab states--even if they suspected some degree of Turkish participation. Degree of support they would give probably be determined by:
 1. extent to which Turkish initiative could be concealed,
 2. more importantly, indications likelihood success.
 - B. However, all would unite to oppose Israeli action and most would oppose Turkish or Turkish-dominated move.
- IV. Syrian ruling group basically nationalist extremists but has gone farther with Soviet Bloc than Nasir.

- A. Only one or two members (CP leader Bakdash and probably Chief of Staff Bizri) influenced by Communist ideology but remainder apparently uncritical in trust of Bloc;
 - B. They have already accepted degree of dependence for arms, trade, aid, political support, which gives Bloc significant political and economic warfare capabilities;
 - C. this trend likely to continue even if--as is likely--membership of group changes.
- V. Ruling group will probably use threat nationalization to squeeze all possible revenue from oil pipelines.
- A. Unlikely, however, to interrupt flow of petroleum except in case of what it considers major provocation;
 - B. such provocation--real or imagined--could come from Israel, other hostile neighbors, or the West.
- VI. Since completion of the estimate, the following developments have taken place.

2. Soviet cruisers and destroyers, now in Mediterranean, could be used if Moscow decides to show flag.

3. In past week Soviet propaganda has bitterly attacked US moves in Syrian situation, but has not threatened use of military force.
- B. More leftist demands for immediate social and economic reform accompanied by purge of civil service, replacing "lackeys of imperialism" with citizens having a "constructive" mentality.
 1. Minister of Economy Kallas has called for end of "complete" economic freedom and replacement with "special economic system" of "progressive and guided" type.
 2. Defense Minister Azm, however, has tried to assure industrialists and land-owners their property is safe from nationalization. As man of wealth he said he "had no intention distribute it to others."
- C. There are some reports of rifts and turmoil in Syrian ruling group.
 1. Communist leader Bakdash has criticized Baathist leader Hawrani for saying that Communist Party is insignificant.
 2. Sarraj-Baathist group reported opposing transfers desired by Chief of Staff Bisri. Struggle for power in army thus seems to be continuing even though the older officers have been eliminated.
- D. King Saud, whom Iraqis and Jordanians have felt is key to Arab action on Syria, has expediently absented himself by sudden trip to Baden-Baden "for his teeth."

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2. Saud's position is to lament developments in Syria but to be very wary of any overt, direct remedial steps at this time

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VII. Meanwhile, Syria's neighbors are acting to protect themselves.

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B. Iraq,

has moved some

forces from the Mosul oil fields area toward northeast Syria. It has not yet reinforced its forward base at oil pumping station H-3, the jump-off point for a move toward Jordan or Damascus.

- 1. The Iraqis charged today (12 Sept) they have uncovered plot with close link to the Syrian leftists. The Iraqis could use such charges as justification for more overt action against the Syrian regime.**

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D. Lebanon also is taking security counter-measures, but [redacted]

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[redacted] Lebanese morale is falling and pro-Western president Chamoun's political tactics may divide the pro-Western camp there.

E. While the Lebanese and Jordanians would probably cave in fairly soon without outside support, the Iraq and Turkish governments, particularly the Turks, are unlikely to tolerate subversive Syrian activity very long before they would attempt some counter-moves of their own.

F. The Israelis are watchful but apparently unalarmed, believing the threat of the Syrian developments aims at the Arab states rather than at them. There has been a series of border incidents in the past week, however, and the Israelis plan maneuvers near the Syrian frontier next week.

VIII. The Syrians and the Egyptians are pretty clearly worried,

especially by the possibility of Turkish action. [redacted]

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[redacted] The Syrian cabinet is also said to be in "continuous session."

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